

A Critical Analysis of *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*:
Successful or Unsuccessful Counter-Discourse of Conrad's
Novella?

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This paper aims to conduct a critical analysis of Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* and English author Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* to study whether Achebe's postcolonial novel works as a successful counter-discourse of Conrad's controversial book. This paper also aims to analyze whether Conrad was actually critical against colonialism or did he inherit racist traits more despite being a writer of the modernist period. We can witness the portrayal of Africans, and their condition of life in these two novels. Joseph Conrad has written his novel from the perspective of a European spectator. Chinua Achebe has written the novel from the perspective of an African native. Certainly, their ways of seeing Africa are not alike. In the essay named "An Image of Africa", Achebe states Conrad as a racist person and discusses how he misrepresents Africa. Conrad depicts Africa as wild, uncivilized, and dark. Achebe has pointed out Conrad's image of Africa as distorted and one-sided. Achebe in his novel shows African history, education, religion, society, and many other aspects which are unknown to the west. This paper followed the textual analysis of qualitative data reflected in these novels. The research is important because it will help us understand the orientalist approach of the West—the unequal power relation of the Oriental and the Occidental, and hegemony created by the West through their literary works. These issues have been analyzed with the help of prominent post-colonial theories and books like Edward W. Said's *Orientalism* and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Keywords: racism; misrepresentation; counter-discourse; postcolonialism; Orientalism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Heart of Darkness is a famous literary work by Polish-English author Joseph Conrad. In his novella he narrates the tale of a sailor named Marlow. Marlow accepts a position as a ferry-boat commander for a Belgian commercial enterprise in the center of Africa. The work explores the themes of power relations and ethics and is largely viewed as a critique of merciless European colonialism. But the work cannot be considered as unbiased, as it seems critical towards black Africans too.

Things Fall Apart by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe is one of the most unique stories about lives of African Igbo people and their past, traditions culture; around the beginning of 20th century. Achebe adapted the novel's name from a poem- a line in W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming." Achebe in his work *Things Fall Apart* delivers a wonderful and authentic presentation of African Igbo society, their history, culture everything. Achebe also shows what took place in the Nigerian society—the Igbo society during the British subjugation of that nation. The society of “Umuofia” in this novel is unsuccessful to resist the tsunami of external technology, business, religion and colonial authority because of fundamental defects in their native structure and the fragmented condition of their society after the colonizers arrived. Both pre-colonial and colonial period in the Igbo society has been depicted by Achebe in his novel. How enriched the Igbo culture, history, tradition was before the colonial period, and how because of colonialism is a attack on African identity and culture, due to which everything falls apart has been presented in Achebe's work.

This research will center on Achebe's work *Things Fall Apart* and how the author responds to Conrad's book *Heart of Darkness* in the aim to correct inaccurate representations of African indigenous people and show the actual image of Africa; along with investigating whether this great postcolonial literature of Achebe has been a successful counter-discourse

or not. Moreover; this study will include Conrad's purpose of writing his text, his perspective on Western imperialism—whether he was against colonialism and actually critical of it or if he was more of a racist person.

1.1 Motive of the thesis

The primary aim of the study is to investigate on whether Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* works as a successful counter-discourse of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Moreover, this research will analyze whether Conrad inherits racist attributes despite being a writer of the modernist period. *Things Fall Apart*-has often been cited by many critics as an antithesis to the novella *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe also agrees that his motivation to write this postcolonial work of literature was to establish it as a counter-discourse. In an essay titled "Named for Victoria, Queen of England," Achebe expresses his views by stating: "Although I did not set out consciously in that solemn way I now know that my first book, *Things Fall Apart*, was an act of atonement with my past, a ritual return and homage of a prodigal son" (193). "An Image of Africa" is Achebe's another essay where he expresses his reaction to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, stating him "a bloody racist." *Things Fall Apart* is projected as a reply against the white supremacy as depicted in colonial literature. The novel can be considered a critic of other colonial writers too. The novel critiques the illustration of Africa in Western colonial literature as an uncultured and uncivilized society.

This paper will explore and investigate the narratives of Achebe and Conrad in their respective texts -their individual and very contrasting ways of representing the image of Africa and the African natives. The goal of this study is to present how negative the representation of the non-whites are in the eyes of the Europeans and in what ways this type of depiction generally involves imbalanced power dynamics. In addition, the paper will

discuss Achebe's story for its accurate and genuine portrayal of an early African civilization that opposes colonial beliefs.

1.2. Background

A novel is a work of fiction that is the outcome of the writer's artistic process, as a way of expressing ideas. The ideas are influenced by the author's worldview and his image to represent the world, society, culture, and reality. The author's view of the world is very significant for the establishment of the novel. His ideas are developed by his own experiences in life. This is why we do not get the true and full image of the world through one writer's representation in a novel. For this reason, the plot, settings, characters, and other features are presented based on the limited experience of the author. Fiction does not promise to depict the true reality. It depicts reality as the historical and sociological context of a certain society at a certain time. This is why we can say that the historical and sociological context represented as reality in fiction is factual. However, it is not impossible that the author can distort the true depiction of the plot, setting, characters, and other elements for some reasons. He can do it for the purpose of developing the plot or to easily deliver his intended message. There must be a reason why the adjustment is done. Both the novels *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart* are fictions which presents fictional characters. Achebe wrote his novel at the ending of Africa's colonial period. His opinion about creating this work is that he wrote it for a certain reason-as a response to the African (mis)representation in Western literature. He intends to establish the novel as a counter-discourse.

Achebe, in "An Image of Africa," discusses the racist viewpoints that the Occident holds. He focuses mainly on Africa. He proposes his arguments around Conrad's depiction of Africans in his text *The Heart of Darkness*. The narrator of Conrad's story travels towards colonial Africa through the river Congo River. According to Achebe, the images shown by

Conrad reflect his preoccupation with the “darkness” of the land of Africa; not only the black skin of the African natives. Conrad’s way of portraying Africa was as the “other” of Europe and Europe was considered by the Europeans as the civilized part of the world. Conrad appears to be fixated on the wild characteristics of African land and its inhabitants in an effort to demonstrate that Europeans were able in to vanquishing that "darkness"; but also that it can be dangerous to contact with such individuals or to stay in such places which still have not overcome that primitiveness; since their barbarism could envelop the civilized people and drive them back to wildness- for example presenting Kurtz’s incident of going insane gradually. In Marlow’s narration—“Being alone in the wilderness...had gone mad” (Conrad).

In his book even though Conrad shows the brutality of Western imperialism; but he also seems to be critical towards the African natives depicting them often in a maniac state, being dead, or otherwise scurrying about. They are only given bodily gestures, noises, and groans instead of any language. Only times they are given voice were when they are shown like cannibals calling out for prey and when the slave-man informs the narrator about the death of Mr. Kurtz. According to Achebe such examples are purposed to demonstrate how horrifying those natives are and what terrible their condition is because of being black humans. Given these images, it hints at Conrad’s racist attitude; and it is surprising to Achebe that in all the years of scholarship no one seems to even want to admit that or deal with it. Achebe finds it odd that despite years of scholarship, no one seems to even want to acknowledge or deal with Conrad's racism in light of these images. Because Westerners have long used Africa as a foil, claiming that it is equally as backward as Europe is advanced; it is a blind mark in the Western culture. Therefore, it is a continuation of the colonialism and racism heritage when people say they are unaware of the existence of African culture. The West must first let go of its long-held assumptions about the barbarism of the people of Africa; if there is to be any good or genuine contact between Africa and the West.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Methodology

This study used qualitative method as the research methodology, as this methodology is the most suitable for conducting the study. As data, existing journals, book, articles etc. had been used. Among the books, two primary texts were used- Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Postcolonial theories and texts like- Edward Said's theory and book *Orientalism* (1978) and Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) had been used for supporting and proving the research statement by the end of the research.

The whole paper contains five chapters in total for proper understanding and organization. Each chapter was divided into different sections. Chapter one included the introduction, chapter two methodology and theoretical framework, chapter three consisted literature review, chapter four dealt with analysis and discussion, and lastly the concluding part was included in chapter five.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In her 2017 paper "Introducing Postcolonialism in International Relations Theory," author Nair says that "postcolonialism is the way that colonial and imperial history continues to shape a colonial worldview and the way that Western institutions of knowledge and power ignored the rest of the world" (12). Peter Barry says in the book named *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* that "postcolonial criticism can be traced back to Frantz Fanon's 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth*" (195). This book was a kind of "cultural resistance" against the French African Empire. Fanon thought that the Western government should respond with force. Many academics say that this fight was the start of what is now called "postcolonialism." The point of this idea is to learn about one's own past

again. The "black man" is taught that the "white man" is better than him. Fanon talks about how the West's language, culture, religion, legal system, and educational systems have been used to support his claim. When colonists do well-planned projects, natives start to think that they are not as good as the West. Postcolonialism was also influenced by Edward Said's famous theory and book *Orientalism* (1978). The purpose of this book was to talk about the long tradition of negative misrepresentations of the Orient/East by the Occident or the West. "Orientalism is a form of Eurocentric universalism, which says that everything European or Western is better than everything else" (Barry 195).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Several literary scholars say that postcolonialism is a way to reject Western culture and reclaim one's own identity. English postcolonial theorist Robert J.C. Young in his article titled "What is the Postcolonial?" says that "...some writers have tried to redefine the postcolonial anachronistically to mean resistance to the colonial at any time" (13); both literally and figuratively for civilizations that are still being colonised. Young mentions that postcolonialism was shaped by the political knowledge and experience that colonial people gained when they fought against western power and cultural dominance, especially during anti-colonial fights in the 19th and 20th century. Postcolonialism is based on the search for a sense of self.

3.1. Postcolonialism

Postcolonial writers often try to disprove what the West (the colonisers) says about how barbaric and backward the East (the colonised) is. They want to reclaim their history by showing the truth about their past. Postcolonial writers focus on how little non-Western cultures are shown in literature and try to change people's minds from the bottom up. Barry says that they "deny the claims to universalism made by traditional Western literature and

show its limits, especially its inability to sympathise across cultural and ethnic borders" (201). Postcolonial studies look at how differently non-Western civilizations are represented in Western literature.

Postcolonialism also shows how native people were treated during the colonial period. Young says that postcolonial is "the product of different cultural and national origins, the ways in which the colour of your skin or where and how you were born determines the kind of life you will have in this world, whether it is privileged and happy or oppressed and exploited"(13-14). Postcolonialism refers to the colonised, oppressed, Orient, subaltern classes, and minorities, as well as those who the West considers inferior. Young furthermore says that the goal of postcolonialism is to make identities irrelevant so that people are only defined by their complex relationships with others. Postcolonialism is important because it tries to change the way the West sees the East. The goal of the postcolonial spectrum is to get people in the West to learn more about other cultures instead of calling them "primitive" or "savage." Barry says that he thinks the Orient is a replacement for the West and even a hidden part of the West (195). In his review of Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*; Young mentions that it means "realising that when Westerners look at the non-Western world, what they see is usually a reflection of themselves and their own ideas, not the reality of what is there" (16). Postcolonialism tries to show people about different cultures so they can be proud to be "Other." It wants literary scholars to tell the truth about the East so that real facts about them can spread from one generation to the next. Most works of literature show the West as a civilised place, while non-Western cultures are shown as wild and primitive. Postcolonial literature tries to change these beliefs and ways of thinking about non-Western cultures into more respectful and well-informed ideas, so that the traditions of colonised people are given the same importance in society.

Postcolonialism uses a unique point of view to change how the West and the rest of the world are set up. The goal is to get people to look at civilizations outside of the West in a different way. Postcolonialism tries to change how people think about cultures outside of the West. Rukundwa and Aarde write, "Postcolonial theory formulates its critique around the social histories, cultural differences, and political discrimination that are practised and normalised by colonial and imperial machineries" (1174).

3.1. 1. Postcolonial theory

In the journal named "Postcolonial Theory and the Study of Christian Theory," Randall Styers says, "The 1960s and 1970s saw major developments in anti-colonialist literature. Fanon was responsible for another milestone, his 1961 *The Wretched of the Earth*—an assault on Western racism introduced to Western audiences through an influential preface by Jean-Paul Sartre...And then in 1978 Edward Said published *Orientalism*, which played a central role in the emergence of postcolonial studies as a distinct academic enterprise"(851). Post colonial literatures often work as counter-discourses to colonial literature. Edwards Said's Orientalism theory and his groundbreaking work *Orientalism* shows this concept. This work is a document against the misrepresentation of the East by the West; by making the East as the "other" or the inferior, weak, feminine, exotic etc. and considering "self" as the masculine, powerful, rational etc. In his work Said shows the real images of the East or the Orient and how the true facts have always been distorted by the West or the Occident. This theory of Said has achieved tremendous success and began the era of postcolonial studies; along with working as a discourse against the West's long held prejudices and distorted images of the East. Said says in the introduction of his book—

I believe it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that was is commonly circulated by it is not truth but representations...The

value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such.(21)

In what way Said's Orientalism theory work as counter-discourse of colonial literature can be understood by the following statement by Shehla Burney in her article "Chapter Two: Edward Said and Postcolonial Theory: Disjunctured Identities and the Subaltern Voice":

Edward Said's monumental work has changed the focus of academic attention from the dominant, logocentric, and mainstream Western narrative to the emerging intercultural discourse of the Other, helping to build...a pedagogy of the Other, wherein postcolonial theory and *praxis* can bring Eastern cultures, literatures, geopolitics, and vast scholarship of the other half of the globe from the margins to the centers of learning and teaching. (41).

Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's work is also very significant in the field of postcolonial studies. His 1961's famous work the *Wretched of the Earth* presents serious consequences of colonization which are dehumanizing. This work has given account of the violence and horrors of colonialism which do psychological and physical damage to both the colonist and the colonizer; and this leads the colonized subject for revolution to achieve decolonization. In the preface of Fanon's book Sartre writes, "This is what Fanon explains to his brothers in Africa, Asia and Latin America: we must achieve revolutionary socialism all together everywhere, or else one by one we will be defeated by our former masters" (11).

In a book named *The Empire Writes Back* it is mentioned: "From the time of colonisation to the present, the imperial process has been a source of inspiration for postcolonial writing"(2); by the authors Tiffin, Griffiths and Ashcroft. They add, "Postcolonial literature tries to rebuild connections between natives and the places they used

to call "home." This is because colonialism took over other countries and forced foreign customs and practises on the natives. Peter Barry says that the European army that took over the country ignored its pre-colonial history for decades, seeing it like "pre-civilized limbo" or "historical nothingness" (95). Due to colonialism, native cultures and customs of the nations being colonised had been replaced by those of the colonisers. Postcolonial literature is meant to show how important, rich, and resilient indigenous cultures are. Since these rites and practises were lost during the colonial era, it is also a goal to bring back the natives' pride in the celebrations they used to hold before the colonists came.

One of the prominent 'colonial, racist' perspectives underlying the imperial project comes from the people who came to colonise thought that the native people were barbarians who couldn't run their own governments and lived in stagnant, unproductive societies that needed help from the outside to get better. By asserting this point of view, colonisers try to justify their actions. This is inherently a very anti-universal, hypocritical position, particularly ironic considering that the surge of British imperialism occurred during the era following the European Enlightenment, Romantic and Victorian eras. However, postcolonial theory and theories critical of the modernist (and so called 'humanist') project have revealed that discourses of rationality, enlightenment and modernism and coincide with discourses of racism, cultural supremacy and dogmaticism. One of Conrad's features of originality in his modernist experimentations was how he showed the 'magical' primitivist thinking of White men, whether in relation to money (Queen Victoria's face in the coin in "Karain: A Memory", Conrad, Selected Short Stories; 1997) or some other totem that men revere, almost like a superstition. Postcolonial literature tries to learn about one's own past and says the narrative from the perspectives of native people for making us understand those people's points of view. Postcolonial writing tries to show that, contrary to what most people think, not all kinds of writing are the same. If we say that the importance of great literature is

timeless and universal, we ignore or downplay differences in experience and point of view that come from culture, society, region, and country. Instead, we use a single, supposedly universal set of rules to judge all written works (Barry, 194).

3.2. Colonialism

During colonialism, the idea of postcolonialism grew. So, it is important to look at both colonialism and postcolonialism at the same time. Most written records show that colonisation happened during the ending of nineteenth century. Ania Loomba in the book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* says that colonialism is the act of taking over the land and property of another people and ruling over it. How do different kinds of ideas help colonialism spread? The West thought that all Africans were barbarians because they didn't think they were smart enough to help civilise the continent. Author Iweriebor in his article titled "State Systems in Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post-Colonial Nigeria: An Overview" mentions about situation of the African country Nigeria during colonial times—

[W]ith the imposition of colonial domination, the colonial power's state system, structure and its values were imposed on Nigeria...since the colonising power, Britain, was a parliamentary liberal bourgeois democracy, it sought to foist the structure and ideological baggage of colonialism, the introduction of bourgeois democratic institutions and practices was considered as part of the civilising mission.(509)

The author furthermore says about the how the democracy could not be successful because of negative effects of colonialism: "partly because of racism, and partly because of the economic exploitative motivation and goals of colonialism, a full blown bourgeois democracy could not be allowed to operate without various qualifications"(510).

Eric Allina in her writing "Transforming 'beasts into men': colonialism, forced labour, and racism in Africa" mentions, "colonial authorities across the continent said that Africans

had to work no matter what. Several rules made this possible, but they all relied on the idea that Africans had the intelligence or morality to figure out how much their work was worth. During the time that Europeans colonised Africa, slavery was illegal, but the Europeans thought that Africans would be eager to work if the area got better” (8-9). Allina furthermore mentions that European colonisers had to make Africans work for them because of a racist, self-serving attitude called "paternalism." Even though European colonisers said that European culture would "save" Africans, colonisation made it more likely that Africans would be forced to work in new ways. Africa had to change into a modern culture where the level of civilization of its people was measured by how much they looked like Westerners. "European culture was (and still is) thought to be the basis and standard for legitimate ideas about government, law, economics, science, language, music, art, and literature," says Young (19).

It is hard to explain what is going on without knowing how capitalists see colonialism. Loomba says in his book, “colonialism contributed to the rise of capitalism in Europe" or that "the transition to capitalism in Europe could not have happened without the development of colonialism" (10). The idea of colonisation brought Europe a lot of wealth. In his study *Neocolonialism* author Afisi Oseni Taiwo looks at how money fits into the idea of colonialism. He says that Europeans first tried to colonise when they started looking for trade opportunities outside of their own place and found that other different countries, especially Africa, had a lot of natural assets that could help them make money (17). The European colonizers in *Heart of Darkness* went to Congo and colonized the place for getting ivory, a very valuable thing.

3.3. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A counter-discourse against misrepresentation of Africans in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

In the journal article titled "Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and Tradition in *Things Fall Apart*," the author Kwadwo Osei-Nyame mentions about Achebe's agendas of writing, "Writing stories that speak for themselves is central to Achebe's novelistic agenda" (148). Achebe's text *Things Fall Apart* is actually written by following this agenda; it has been written to give voice to the Africans who had not been given any voice to speak for themselves in *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe shows the traditions, culture, language everything of the Igbo people through his work; to let the world know that Africans are not "cannibals," "savage," like the way Conrad depicts them in his work. Author Nyame talks about a "famous early essay" of Achebe where he said: " 'I would be quite satisfied if my novels...did no more than teach my readers their past...was not one long night of savagery from which first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them' " (quoted in "Morning Yet" 45). Through this statement Achebe tries to make his readers understand the reality that people of Africa always had traditions, culture, past of their own; and European colonizers were not any angels coming from God who helped them to come out from their "savagery" just within a night's time.

Next, the author Nyame mentions in page 149 of his article: "Challenging and displacing the narratives of colonialist writers like...Joseph Conrad meant for Achebe the appropriation of ethnographic modes of representation to prove that the communities of his African past were neither "primitive" nor "without history" (quoted in Clifford 10). So Achebe's one of the aims of writing an antithesis of Conrad's work was to prove the wrong ideas of Conrad that African communities had no history; and they are prehistoric human beings. That is why Achebe decides to show the past, culture, traditions everything of the

Igbo in his novel; as a protest against Conrad's prejudiced notions about native Africans. Besides, Achebe's purpose to write this novel was to show the world both past history of Igbo people when colonizers have not invaded their land yet; along with showing the colonial history—"The story re-enacts phases of the precolonial and colonial traditional order of African history by featuring the beginnings of some significant moments of nationalist ideological crisis in the communities of Umofia and Mbanta" (Nyame 150). Furthermore, Nyame adds, "Achebe, following Fanon, locates Igbo societies in the liminal space of history in which they grapple with the imperialist endeavors of colonial power." Through this statement it can be understood that the Igbo people had to "grapple" when the strong colonial power came to demolish their history, identity, culture everything.

In a journal article titled "Making a Post-Eurocentric Humanity: Tragedy, Realism, and *Things Fall Apart*," the writer Kwaku Larbi Korang comments on the purpose of Achebe for writing his novel as a counter-discourse to Conrad's novella.

Achebe's self perception as a representative of the Africa(n) dehumanized and demeaned by Conrad...accounts for the intellectual-philosophical, emotive, aesthetic, and ethical orientations he brings to his creation of a salutary alternative image of Africa in *Things Fall Apart*. In one of those orientations, he is an African writer "writing back" to his Eurocentric predecessors and contemporaries, in protest against their aesthetic, humanistic, and ethical bad faith where their representations of Africa are not concerned. In another orientation, Achebe is a post-Eurocentric writer who revokes and reworks the aesthetic models that his Eurocentric predecessors have otherwise confined to the fixing and reaffirmation of the West as sole or exclusive possessor of humanistic commonsense. Achebe aims therein to affirm a proprietary humanity in intercultural commonsense. (2)

The author furthermore says:

...therefore that we find Achebe criticizing the craft of Conrad...eloquently pointing out how in [his] writing the conventions of a Eurocentric aesthetic of Africa-as realized in characterization, setting, narrative form and technique, language-has been harnessed to a systematic promotion of European disidentification, more or less with African humanity. (2-3)

3.4. Conrad's perspective towards the Africans in his book *Heart of Darkness*: was he actually racist or not?

The debatable question that in the *Heart of Darkness* Joseph Conrad has been more on the side of being critical about imperialism or was he more on the side of racism by demeaning the black people; cannot be overlooked. Different critics have different viewpoints regarding Conrad's works. In a journal article titled "A Bloody Racist: About Achebe's View of Conrad," author Cedric Watts talks about Achebe's paper "An Image of Africa" and says, "No doubt the paper had the value of arousing vigorous debate" (197). Besides, while talking about Achebe's claims about Conrad's racism; Watts mentions:

The blacks are dehumanized and degraded, seen as grotesques or as a howling mob. They are denied speech, or are granted speech only to condemn themselves out of their own mouths. Furthermore, Marlow (who is Conrad's mouthpiece) is guilty of liberalism, which entails a paternalist form of racialism. As the tale unfolds, the author displays 'a preposterous and perverse kind of arrogance in...reducing Africa to the role of props for the breakup of one pretty European mind.' However talented Conrad maybe, his tale preaches racial intolerance; it is on the side of enslavement rather than deliverance; and it is therefore to be condemned. (197)

Watts mentions about Achebe's complaints against Conrad for bringing up the idea in his book that some of the African natives were cannibals. "Achebe complains that when Conrad grants speech to the blacks, it is only in order that they be condemned out of their own mouths, as when the crew of the steamboat say 'Catch 'im...Eat 'im!', thus proclaiming themselves as cannibals" (201). In real those black people did not eat human flesh and despite being hungry they showed great self-control. Rather, it was Kurtz who gradually becomes maniac; loses control over himself. He turns into a cruel monster and murderer despite being a white European coming from so called "civilized" society. Watts says

More important in the story is the irony: the cannibal crew actually refrain from eating human flesh on the journey (so that Marlow is puzzled by their great restraint'), whereas it is strongly hinted that the European, Kurtz, participates in rites in which he eats human flesh-and 'he lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts. (201)

Besides talking about Achebe's views on Conrad's racism; the author Cedric Watts in his journal article also presents good sides of Conrad's writing along with trying to prove Achebe's criticism of Conrad's work was "saddening" in many respects; as Conrad did not leave behind in presenting the horrors of Western imperialism and the evil sides of European colonizers. Watts says, "Both writers protest against man's inhumanity to man, and their definitions of that inhumanity are strikingly incongruent" (206). Watts explains why he thinks that Achebe's attack on Conrad is sad:

The most saddening part of Achebe's attack comes when, while conceding that the tale contains 'advanced and humane views', he proceeds to treat those views as though they are, after all, retrograde and inhuman: he talks rather sneeringly of 'liberalism' and defines it in such a way to imply that it entails or supports racial intolerance (201).

Furthermore Watts criticizes Achebe's perspectives to some extent by saying "Achebe appears somewhat hard to please. When the tale offers views which he regards as illiberal, he condemns them; and when the tale is humane and liberal, he redefines such liberalism as racist liberalism" (202). Watts thinks that although *Heart of Darkness* has many "paradoxes," Achebe's inability or unwillingness to see the "ethical direction" of Conrad's book is a matter of regret. He thinks both the writers as to be on the same side (in case of literary merit) and mentions Conrad as "brother" to Achebe. According to Watts, "The two works are in important ways similar and complimentary" (204). And as the reason for saying this Watts describes:

Though there are distinctive differences between their approaches, both Conrad and Achebe employ a narrative technique which, basically realistic, has an impressionistic vividness and, partly through deliberate patterning of incident, a richly symbolic resonance. Both exploit irony and paradox on a large and small scale...Both value contrasting perspective in space and in time: the large historical process and the viewpoint of the individual caught up in, and not fully comprehending, that process; the view of the native, intersected by the view of the white invader (205).

In these ways, in his journal Watts shows some similarities between the two novels. His argument in this article is to differ from Achebe's views of considering Conrad as "bloody racist" by showing both Achebe's negative perspectives and talking about the good sides of Conrad and his work *Heart of Darkness*. Does this mean that Conrad was not racist and Achebe's criticisms and his famous post-colonial work *Things Fall Apart* as a counter discourse to Conrad's work cannot be regarded as successful? The answer to these questions will be explored in the discussion part by analyzing the two novels.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Discussion

Joseph Conrad was a writer of the modernist period; and his novella *Heart of Darkness* is also considered by many as a modern work which depicted the horrors of imperialism and evil side of white colonizers. But his work cannot be considered as unbiased, he seems to be critical towards the Africans too in some regards; particularly the way he presented them in his novella *Heart of Darkness*. Although Conrad was a modernist writer; even modernists can have racist discourses embedded in their worldview. Colonization continued into the modernist period. The nineteenth century was the time of expansion of European colonization throughout the whole world; specifically Asia and African continent. Modernism does not necessarily mean all writers of this period would be always positive. Even Western Liberalism often has often been blind to its own liberalism regarding its own others and the rest of the world. It is a projection onto other's landscape, one's own imagination.

To discuss the answer to the question that Conrad was more critical about Western imperialism or about the racial inferiority of black African people; the opinions of different people can be taken into consideration. Many critics think Conrad was against Western imperialism and that is why he presents the horrors of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*; but again some critics have opposite viewpoint regarding this issue. They think *Heart of Darkness* is more of a work containing much racism. The most prominent critic in this regard is Chinua Achebe. Chinua Achebe criticizes Conrad's racism and way of misrepresenting black Africans; particularly in his article "An Image of Africa." This has already been mentioned in the literature review section. Now it will be discussed in details in this part.

4.1 Achebe's criticism towards Conrad and his work *Heart of Darkness*

In his well known essay, "An image of Africa," Achebe criticizes Conrad harshly and cites many examples from *Heart of Darkness* to demonstrate that Conrad has racist attributes. He regards Conrad's work as "totally deplorable and "offensive." Achebe describes: "I am talking about a book which parades in the most vulgar fashion prejudices and insults from which a section of mankind has suffered untold agonies and atrocities in the past and continues to do so in many ways and many places today." He furthermore adds, "I am talking about a story in which the very humanity of black people is called in question. It seems to me totally inconceivable that great art or even good art could possible reside in such unwholesome surrounding" (790). Achebe asserts that racism permeates the entire work and cannot be avoided or ignored. Conrad's characterization of Africa as "the other world" and as "the anti-thesis of Europe" (783) is one of Achebe's primary concerns. Africa is portrayed in the *Heart of Darkness* "the other world"—"It is a location where man's wild nature mocks his intelligence and sophistication." Achebe as an illustration examines the contrasting ways in which Conrad portrayed the River Thames and the River Congo. While Conrad depicts the Thames as a placid river that has served humanity for centuries and is now at rest; he depicts the Congo as a gateway to an old world that has yet to see and learn humanity, "going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginning of the world" (48). Achebe thinks Conrad utilizes Africa for comparison in order to illustrate how much civilized Europe is. According to Conrad's perspective, Africa is a puzzling continent inhabited by people who are too ancient and unique for a modern, civilized European man to comprehend. His attitude is like Africans do not have the ability to be civilized. Achebe also utilizes different significant narrations from Conrad's novel to demonstrate Conrad's racism:

The earth seemed unearthly...and the men were-No, they were not inhuman. Well you know, that was the worst of it-this suspicion of their not being inhuman..They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes it was ugly enough ;...(quoted. in Achebe 785).

Conrad's depiction seems like he thinks being of the same species as Africans is unsettling and humiliating. Conrad had just one word to describe the likelihood that he was linked to these Africans and that is—they were a small part of his own history. Achebe argues that Conrad's depiction of the fireman is one of the few times in which an African character is represented as more than a bundle of limbs or rolling eyes. The phrase "clapping his hands and stamping his feet" still has an African flavor. Conrad shows his racist attitude through the narration in the story by mentioning the fireman as "poor devil" and comparing him with a dog, "to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs" (785). Furthermore, Achebe emphasizes on Conrad's preference for things to be in their appropriate positions. As instance, he offers the description of Africans in Conrad's novella as "They are decent individuals, but they are cannibals. Audience members screamed and sang. They were saturated in perspiration and wore hideous masks (Conrad 78).

Achebe, in his essay particularly indicates to the narration in the *Heart of Darkness* where the narrator describes the hungry natives asking some food and just because of this thinks them to be cannibal. Achebe mentions, "At first these instances might be mistaken for unexpected acts of generosity from Conrad. In reality, they constitute some of his best assaults" (786). Through this statement it can be understood clearly that Achebe detested much against Conrad's depiction of the Africans as cannibals. It is pathetic that that Conrad

in his book presented the idea of those Africans being cannibals because ultimately they showed great self-restraint and did not eat human flesh despite being very hungry.

Achebe's next argument against Conrad's work is his doubt about the accuracy of the work. Although Achebe is aware that he "might be challenged on the grounds of actuality" as Achebe was just a small baby when Conrad's journey took place in the 1890's; but according to Achebe, as a rational man it is not possible for him to blindly believe the tale of Conrad's journey where Achebe himself has not visited. He states: "I will not trust the evidence even of a man's very eyes when I suspect them to be as jaundiced as Conrad's. And we also happen to know that Conrad was, in the words of his biographer, Bernard C. Meyer, "notoriously inaccurate in the rendering of his own history" (791).

Achebe gives an example of the world famous traveller Marco Polo who more than twenty years stayed in China. In his book title *Description of the World* Polo wrote about customs, places, people everything. But very astonishingly, he did not mention anything about the grand massive architecture—The Great Wall of China. Achebe gives this example to show how travellers can be blind; for comparing Conrad who misrepresented the Africans in his work due to blind or "jaundiced" eyes. For all the criticism and comments Achebe makes on Conrad's work, he presents logical references and direct narrations from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. This shows that Achebe's criticisms of Conrad as "racist" cannot be said illogical. The racism, discriminations, misrepresentations of Africans, giving them no voice at all etc. different issues in *Heart of Darkness* led Achebe to write his great postcolonial work *Things fall Apart* as a counter discourse. Has *Things Fall Apart* worked as a successful counter discourse or not, will be discussed and proven while analysing Achebe's novel; after discussing in details Conrad's book.

4.2 Analyzing *Heart of Darkness*

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* deals with not just the horrors of imperialism; it also contains racist elements. *Heart of Darkness* depicts the image of the center of Africa—The Congo in the nineteenth century and reveals the hypocrisies of colonial mission. The horrors of imperialism are clearly evident in Conrad's work, especially through the evil character Kurtz; whom the native people consider as “god.” The brutalities on the colonized people done by Kurtz and his insanity which gradually turns him into a murderer; shows the bad side of the white people. Greed for ivory turns Kurtz into an extremely cruel monster, mentally unstable and evil person. Through the characterization of Kurtz; Conrad has shown how the souls of the white colonizers got completely damaged because of their avarice and their inhuman treatment to the black colonized people of Africa by making them slaves; using racism and cultural superiority as the tool. Here Frantz Fanon's theory and his psychological analysis from his book *The Wretched of the Earth* can be referred to. In his work, Frantz Fanon has shown how colonization psychologically affects both the “colonists” and the colonized people and brings different changes in them. In chapter five of his book named “Colonial War And Mental Disorders,” Fanon talks about this issue and mentions case studies of different patients. According to Fanon, and the colonized people get psychologically damaged due to experiencing the brutalities of colonization; and the colonizers' mental health get damaged because of the extreme violence they did or witnessed during colonial ruling; From this, the reasons behind Kurtz' changed mental condition and insanity can be comprehended.

The most significant character in Conrad's story is the narrator Marlow; who can be considered as representing inner thoughts of Conrad and working as the mouthpiece of him. Most of the description in the story is narrated by Marlow, and the rest by an unnamed

narrator. So, through the eyes of Marlow readers get to know everything happening in Congo; along with getting ideas about how the black Africans are. Marlow begins his story by saying, “I do not want to bother you much what happened to me personally” (Conrad 10). His purpose of saying it was to alarm the audience as he considered his journey as not a pleasant one. This statement also seems kind of racist as Conrad here tries to present Africa as a dark, dangerous place and that is why Marlow’s experience is not good there.

From the beginning of the story; racism can be seen in different forms. Conrad shows his racist attitude mainly by depicting the native Africans as black, ugly, cannibals, savages, calling them “niggers” etc. such demeaning names. In many of the narrations in the *Heart of Darkness* this can be noticed: “Black figures strolled about listlessly pouring water on the glow, whence proceeded a sound of hissing, stream ascended in the moonlight the beaten nigger groaned somewhere” (37).

Always using the word “nigger” indicates how the white people considered themselves as racially superior because of having white skin. They thought Africans are barbaric, uncivilized and Kurtz was sent to the Congo in the mission of “civilizing” the uncivilized savages. The black people in Conrad’s text have been portrayed almost similar to animals: “It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks-these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement...” (Conrad 20). Conrad furthermore describes the acts of Africans like animals, “They howled and leaped, and spun and made horrid faces” (51).

The inhuman tortures done on the black colonized slaves give readers the idea how brutal the consequences of imperialism were; the black natives working in the colony were treated like animals only. They were made to work continuously like machines; and were

kept in shackles like animals: “Black rags were wound round their loins and short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails, could see every rib, the joints limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together which a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking” (Conrad 22). Because many people felt that Joseph Conrad's representation denied extreme inequality between the two races, they condemned his description of the Africans as forcefully being obliged to perform rigorous toil. These portrayals furthered the inferiority of Africans and served as a symbol of powerlessness, mortality and despair; as opposed to depictions of white European masters, which served as a symbol of authority.

Although in many places Conrad depicts the black people getting tortured by the white colonizers and tells about their inhuman sufferings; still he could not come out of his obsession of demeaning the black Africans' appearance and their every activity. His way of presenting the Africans shows his racist attitude and pride of his cultural superiority in many places of his text; which Chinua Achebe proves in “An Image of Africa” by taking direct narrations from Conrad's book. This has already been discussed in the previous part. There is much debate about Conrad's work; as many critics think his work is worthy of praise as he showed the true image of European colonialism. Again, many people think Conrad showed racist traits more by wasting too many words in describing in an insulting way the behaviors, appearance and activities of Congolese instead of criticizing more about the brutal aspects of imperialism and the inhuman treatment of the whites on the blacks.

Conrad seems to be much critical about the blacks and it is quite visible through the ways he presents their image in the novella. He is nowhere seen to give respect to the blacks as normal human beings like the white people. Rather, Conrad's narrations often seem to be considering the black Africans similar to just animals. Achebe protests against these insults and dehumanizing the Africans in his criticism. Achebe's belief is that using words like

savage, nigger, etc. was in the purpose of presenting Africans as less than human beings. Many readers classify Conrad as more of racist instead of being more of anti-colonialist; because of the negative humiliating way he depicts Africans in many places—“black shapes crouched, lay sat between the trees leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effectuated within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment and despair” (Conrad 24). Instead of using any name or respectful word to indicate the Africans; Conrad used such words like black shapes, nigger, etc. throughout *Heart of Darkness*.

Another example can be the following: “in the evening three women of whom one albino, passed our camp; horried chalky white with pink blotches; red eyes; red hair; features very negroid and ugly” (Conrad 65). Such examples reveal Conrad’s racist mentality clearly. In his book Conrad never uses any good or respectful word to describe the African people. He relates everything awful or ugly with the blacks. Through constantly judging the African based on either their appearance or behavior; Conrad tries to implement his racial superiority by making the black people inferior. This orientalist mentality of thinking “self” as the superior and the “other” as the inferior by holding different prejudices about the “other” and misrepresenting them is much evident in Conrad’s work. Edward Said’s famous Orientalism theory proves this point of misrepresentation. Said shows in his work *Orientalism* how the West has always belittled, distorted the image of the “other” and considered “self” as the best. Conrad depicts Africa as a dark place full of ugly savages who are uncivilized, cannibals, barbaric, inferior in race compared to the white “civilized” people. He shows European superiority right from the beginning of his novella; when the narration compares the Thames River to the Congo and described the latter as something like of pre-historic age, very backward and a place of darkness; compared to the tranquil Thames.

This colonial mentality of thinking the colonized people as the inferior, subhuman, evil, ugly etc. can also be proven by Frantz Fanon’s theories and discourses in the text *The*

Wretched of the Earth. His chapter one named “Concerning Violence” he illustrates these issues: “The colonial context, as we have said, is characterized by the dichotomy it inflicts on the world...” (78). Fanon furthermore talks about how negatively the colonizers always portray the colonized:

At times this Manicheism goes to its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly, it turns him into an animal. In fact, the terms the settler uses when he mentions the native are zoological terms. He speaks of the yellow man's reptilian motions, of the stink of the native quarter, of breeding swarms, of foulness, of spawn, of gesticulations. When the settler seeks to describe the native fully in exact terms he constantly refers to the bestiary (42).

These things are very much evident in the novella *Heart of Darkness*. The words through which Conrad has presented Africans in his book; is similar to what Fanon mentions:

The European rarely hits on a picturesque style; ... Those hordes of vital statistics, those hysterical masses, those faces bereft of all humanity, those distended bodies which are like nothing on earth, that mob without beginning or_end, those children who seem to belong to nobody, that laziness stretched out in the sun, that vegetative rhythm of life—all this forms part of the colonial vocabulary. (42-43).

4.3 Analyzing Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*: Is it successful as a counter discourse of *Heart of Darkness*?

Achebe’s great literary work *Things Fall Apart* depicts a vivid, authentic and wonderful description of the history, culture, traditions everything of the Igbo African society. This book is considered one of the finest works of African literature. The story in *Things Fall Apart* takes place prior to the British invasion in Nigeria. Achebe depicts both pre-colonial and colonial period for showing how the existing indigenous culture and customs

begin to fall apart after the arrival of the Europeans. Achebe feels it is crucial to reclaim the native history. He recognises the significance of showing the world that the African people always had their own history and culture. Thus, the vivid descriptions of traditional festivals, cultures like- marriage ceremonies, new year's festival, the Igbo's well-respected traditional rules, the amusing yet relevant local parables, the clearly defined roles of men and women in Igbo society etc. aspects become crucial tale elements. Christopher O' Reilly in his book *Postcolonial Literature* mentions, "*Things Fall Apart* has become an anti-orientalist discourse because of the authentic depiction of the Igbo life. The life of the Igbo is romanticized and so distorted by the Europeans. But by presenting a view of pre-colonial Igbo society Achebe attempts to reclaim African history from an African perspective" (34).

Prior to the arrival of the colonisers, the Igbo honoured their culture and traditions and was pleased with their African native identity. They did not need European colonizers to "civilize" them. In addition, they did not require a sacred location such as a church to guide them. Achebe is showing the readers that Igbo culture and customs permeate every aspect of their lives. Labelling Igbo customs as "primitive" or "barbarian" and trying to make them inferior and "other" than the rest of the world are therefore incorrect, which Conrad did in *Heart of Darkness*. Robert J.C. Young mentions that non-Western cultures are viewed negatively by Westerners because they deviate from the European norm (15).

Achebe paints a vivid picture of Igbo society's way of life, their ritual, traditions etc. from a postcolonial point of view. The goal is to go against how most Western colonial literature like Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* shows native Africans as uncivilized, uncultured, wild and dangerous. *Things Fall Apart* seems to suggest that Achebe is either an Igbo or has done a lot of research on the Igbo people. Achebe gives a lot of details about the Igbos' ceremonies, culture, traditions, social system, their rich language like wonderful moral stories or folktales and the proverbs, etc. so that he can present an accurate picture of them.

Achebe proves in his novel that the Africans are not barbarians or savages because they have a well structured society, African enriched language, traditions, culture, economy, politics, social system, religion, laws everything like a civilized society. So, through his work Achebe disproves the Western prejudiced ideas that indigenous African people are inferior, uncivilized and barbaric. During the time of colonisation, non white people and their ways of life were seen as "primitive," while the cultures of the colonisers were seen as the most "civilised." In Conrad's text Africa's image is portrayed as a dark, primitive location containing savage uncultured people. Postcolonial literature like *Things Fall Apart* explains in detail the glory, richness and legitimacy of indigenous cultures. This is done so that rituals and practises that have been always devalued by Westerners can be looked at with pride again. "Postcolonial writers often imagine or make up a pre-colonial version of their own country. They don't like the modern and current because they think it's tainted by their countries' colonial pasts" describes Peter Barry (196). In his masterpiece, Achebe talks about the past history of the Igbo before Europeans came. They always had their own ways of doing things. Achebe shows how colonisation gradually caused a traditional and significant Igbo tradition to die out. People there did not need to be "modernised" or civilized; they already had civilization. Achebe doesn't think that the languages and customs of Europe are the best way to live. It is not right to demean any culture by considering it the "other" just because it is different from the Europeans. Instead, the "otherness" should be welcomed and respected.

Achebe's great work *Things Fall Apart* goes into great depth about the habits, customs and traditions of the Igbo people to show how unique they are. Why did Chinua Achebe spend so much time in his book on Igbo ceremonies and festivals? Most likely, Achebe is giving Africans a voice and making them less "other." In *Heart of Darkness*; they have no voice of their own. We see the image of the Africans there only through the eyes of the

European narrator. Achebe's counter discourse shows how important it is for the misrepresented and voiceless Africans to speak for themselves and to find their own identities again. That is why Achebe speaks on behalf of the Africans in his work; Achebe becomes their voice which is totally suppressed and unheard in Conrad's work. According to Fanon, for getting back identity and voice; reclaiming their history is the first or beginning step for people who are colonized. Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* says, "From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself..." (283). Achebe successfully does the work of representing true image of Africa in his novel; which refutes the western speculations.

In his novel Achebe gives a detailed description of different events to show people of the West that native traditions of black people are still alive. For example, in his description of different festivals and ceremonies; Achebe shows how everything is done so perfectly. On different festivals, ceremonies and occasions the Igbo people prepare their traditional delicious foods like foo-foo, yam, meat, vegetable soup, palm wine etc. Different such traditional foods have been mentioned in *Things Fall Apart*. Ironically Conrad portrays the native Africans as cannibals in his book; which is very contradictory to it.

In Igbo weddings the whole village turns into a festive mood. Musicians play instruments, sing traditional songs. The groom's family brings palm-wine not only for the bride's family, but for the entire village. Achebe talks about the bride's price to show the social custom of how the Igbo ask a woman for her hand in marriage. As part of the wedding costs, the groom-to-be gives cowries to the bride's family. Achebe gives vivid description of his friend Obierika's daughter's marriage ceremony and says that in the end, twenty bags of cowries were set as the bride price for Akueke (68). Besides ceremonies Achebe describes New Year's Festival, Yam Festival which occurs after the season of harvest, Igbo people's grand wrestling game, even religious ceremonies like the funeral of the renowned old man

Ezedu etc. Besides, Achebe shows their rich oral tradition, different educational stories through which Igbo children receive education, importance of proverbs in their culture etc. Everything proves that African natives are in no way uncivilized or uncultured. Regarding proverbs, he mentions, “Among the Igbo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm oil-with which words are eaten” (Achebe). On the other hand Conrad has totally muted the African’s in his work and depicted them like native Africans cannot even speak properly; they can make just sounds like animals and presented them like sub-humans. Achebe’s story in *Things Fall Apart* shows the authentic, true image of native Africans and works as counter-discourse of Conrad’s misrepresentations and racism; which considered the African race as inferior in all cases. Edward W. Said in his book *Orientalism* says, “The [distorted] Orient was a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1).

Achebe furthermore shows the perfect social system and law and orders of the Igbo people; existing even before the foreign power to civilize and teach them. And obviously law and order is very important part of civilized society; so in which way the native Africans should be considered uncivilized? Because of law, even an influential man like the protagonist Okonkwo had to get punishment of exile mistakenly kills a boy. He gets punishment even when he beats his wife. This shows women also get respect in that society and the Igbo have a proverb which says “Mother is Supreme.” In *Things fall Apart* Achebe has shown that even African woman can be beautiful, such as Okonkwo’s wife Ekwefi who was known as the “village beauty” in her young age, her daughter Ezinma or Okonkwo’s friend’s daughter during her marriage. Conrad shows much racism in her book; by constantly demeaning the appearance of the native Africans and making them racially inferior; here Achebe’s depiction of the Africans work as a counter discourse to that idea.

Things Fall Apart is Chinua Achebe's very famous and best-known work. This work has made important contributions to postcolonial theory and to the ways of thinking about indigenous African people. Irele says, "If you think about what Achebe was trying to do as a writer, his part in making a new postcolonial consciousness may be his biggest impact" (33).. After reading Achebe's masterpiece, readers can understand how Africa has changed over time. By looking at the most important parts of Igbo history, the book wants to disprove the prejudiced idea that Africa is primitive and its people are savages. Achebe is both a Nigerian and post-colonialist, so he knows how enriched Igbo culture is and how hard it was for the Africans to save their culture and deal with colonialism. Achebe is a postcolonial voice who understands well how colonialism destroys people's minds and hearts; as Fanon says about the psychological damage colonialism does on the colonized subject. The story of colonization period in *Things Fall Apart* shows how hard it was for the native Igbo people to save their own identity from the hands of the colonizers. In this regard Frantz Fanon mentions in his book: "Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"'(250). It shows how colonialism can even make the colonized people to forget their identity and makes them accept the identity given by colonizers; by thinking self identity and culture inferior and the colonizer's superior. For example Okonkwo's son Nwoye forgets his father's identity and embraces the colonizer's teachings and religion very easily. When Obierika asks him "How is your father" His reply: "I don't know. He is not my father" (101).

Things Fall Apart also presents how Achebe reclaims the history of Africa's native peoples and shows the truth about their past, which European writers had long lied about or distorted in their writing. Edward Said's theory of *Orientalism* and Fanon's theory in the *Wretched of the Earth* both discourse show the fact that Westerners and the colonizers have

always distorted the truth and created false identity of the non-white and colonized people to make them subjugated, inferior. This has already been discussed in the previous part. Fanon says, "...there was nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory, and solemnity. The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture" (210). Achebe does this in *Things Fall Apart*, by proudly showing the glorious past of African Igbo culture in the pre-colonial period. His purpose of writing his *Things Fall Apart* is to show the real image of Africans to the West, to counter the misrepresentations of Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*. Before colonialism, most European writers thought of Africa as a Stone Age society. In his expose, Achebe, who wants to bring the past back to life, questions the way Europeans view Africa. Peter Barry says, "The European colonising power ignored the country's pre-colonial past for a century, seeing it as a pre-civilized limbo or maybe a historical nothingness" (196). Achebe's elaborated explanation of the African rich history and culture shows that the Western idea of the past of Africa as a "historical blank" is wrong, and any colonial justification that is based on this idea should be rejected. In *Things Fall Apart*; Achebe has shown Africa from an authentic, fresh and native point of view. Thus this work proves to be a successful counter discourse of Conrad's book *Heart of Darkness*. Achebe proves the world that Africa has a long enriched history and that different cultures shouldn't be punished just because they don't follow "European standards."

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and African writer Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* both works are very popular and great works of literature. The answer to the research questions- does *Things Fall Apart* works as a successful counter argument of Conrad's book and was Conrad more of a racist person has been studied in this research. The above detailed analysis and discussion on the two works *Heart of Darkness* and *Things Fall Apart*;

postcolonial theories like Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Frantz Fanon's theories in his *Wretched of the Earth*; along with critics of different people in the literature review have proven that although Conrad presents the negative sides of Western imperialism in his work, still *Heart of Darkness* actually shows much racism against the Africans and seems to be more critical towards the racial inferiority of black people instead of imperialism. It has thus given answer to the research questions. And the way Achebe has wonderfully shown the authentic story of the native black Africans and their long history, traditions and culture—the real image of Africa by proving so many of the Western prejudices wrong; it can undoubtedly regarded a successful discourse against the novella *Heart of Darkness*. Through *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe successfully refutes the racist colonial discourses of Conrad that describe African society as primitive and Africans as ugly, inferior, subhuman, uncultured, etc. That is why *Things Fall Apart* without any doubt can be considered as a victorious counter-discourse.

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